

South Dakota National Guard

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NEWS RELEASE:

Rainy day blues

Tech. Sgt. Quinton Young
114th Fighter Wing Public Affairs

DAKOTA DUNES, S.D. – With the rainfall in Dakota Dunes reaching nearly three inches Monday, the South Dakota National Guard's levee patrols and quick reaction forces pulled back to the Liberty Bank building to seek shelter from the storm.

With overcast skies and reports of baseball size hail in the area, the South Dakota National Guard decided it was too dangerous to have troops exposed to this kind of weather. The levee patrols will have to stand down due to the slick, muddy surface of the levees and other weather-related hazards.

"We use a program called Lightning Tracker to find out if there are any strikes within five miles," said Capt. Kelly Petterson, Sioux Falls, the officer-in-charge of the night shift levee patrols assigned to the 114th Fighter Wing from Sioux Falls. "If there are then we pull the levee patrols and quick reaction force in to shelter."

Soldiers from the 153rd Forward Support Company, from Parkston, helped several civilians push their cars out of the high water where they stalled, and offered rides home to those that were stranded, said Sgt. 1st Class Darren Bigge, from Parkston, the platoon sergeant for the headquarters platoon of the 153rd.

"The water was waist deep and very cold, but getting those people out of their vehicles and to safety was the right thing to do," Bigge said.

The levee patrols and quick reaction force duties can become quite monotonous so we've come up with several ways to keep ourselves busy during our breaks and during the time we are in shelter like this, said Senior Airman Zach Gunn, an Airman from Dell Rapids and a member of the Civil Engineering flight, 114th FW.

"After finding out I could play the piano and sing, the 1st Sgt. asked me to bring my keyboard with me to the levee to help cheer people up a little during breaks," said Gunn.

Just like any deployment we must do everything we can to complete the mission, but no matter what, the important part is that we do it as safe as possible, said Petterson

"In severe weather situations like this the safety of our Soldiers and Airmen becomes a priority" he said.



110620-F-UL435-027: DAKOTA DUNES, S.D. - South Dakota National Guard M-998 "Humvee" trucks sit parked in the drive up teller lanes of the Liberty Bank building June 20, 2011. The vehicles were parked under shelter by members of the South Dakota National Guard due to a large thunderstorm that rolled through the Dakota Dunes area and dropped nearly three inches of rain on the already saturated neighborhoods. (SDNG photo by Tech. Sgt. Quinton Young)(RELEASED)

110620-A-RN486-012: DAKOTA DUNES, S.D. - A large thunderstorm rolls across the Dakota Dunes area June 20, 2011. The storm dropped approximately three inches of rain on the already saturated neighborhoods, as the nearby Missouri River continues to rise against levees built and patrolled by members of the South Dakota National Guard. (SDNG photo by Master Sgt. Donald Matthews)(RELEASED)



110620-F-UL435-034: DAKOTA DUNES, S.D. – Staff Sgt. Andy Kessler, from Lesterville (left) and Sgt. 1st Class Darren Bigge, from Parkston, return to the Liberty Bank building after helping stranded civilians out of their flooded vehicles and giving them rides home June 20, 2011. Both Soldiers are members of the South Dakota National Guard's Forward Support Company, 153rd Engineer Battalion, from Parkston, which is deployed to the Dakota Dunes area as part of the state-wide effort to prevent flooding along the Missouri River.

(SDNG photo by Tech. Sgt. Quinton Young)(RELEASED)

110620-F-UL435-051: DAKOTA DUNES, S.D. – Senior Airman Zach Gunn, from Dell Rapids, and a member of the 114th Fighter Wing, plays piano and sings songs to help pass the time for the Soldiers and Airmen who would normally be performing levee patrols and quick reaction force duties while taking shelter from a thunderstorm June 20, 2011, in the Dakota Dunes Liberty Bank building. The storm dropped nearly three inches of rain on the already saturated neighborhoods, while the Missouri River continues to rise nearby. (SDNG photo by Tech. Sgt. Quinton Young)(RELEASED)



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